

Message Text

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DEPARTMENT PASS OPIC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, FR, UR

SUBJECT: FRENCH/SOVIET FISHING VENTURE IN WEST AFRICA

REF:(A) FREETOWN 2370, (B) STATE 299829, (C) PARIS 28832

1. FRENCH FISHERIES OFFICIALS HAVE SUPPLIED FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT JOINT FRENCH-SOVIET FISHING VENTURE (REFTEL A), WHICH PRESUMABLY FORMS BASIS OF "LE MARIN" STORY (REPORTED REFTEL B):

A) CASACRUZ INTERNATIONAL, IN ADDITION TO ITS TRADITIONAL FISH IMPORT-EXPORT BUSINESS (REFTEL C) HAS PERMANENT OFFICE IN USSR FOR SALE TO SOVIETS OF FISHING, DIVING, AND OTHER MARINE EQUIPMENT. FRENCH OFFICIALS SAY THEY DO NOT KNOW FULL LINE OF PRODUCTS

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DEALT WITH, OR VOLUME OF CASACRUZ BUSINESS.

B) CASACRUZ AND SOVIETS FORMED JOINT VENTURE COMPANY IN 1975 WITH APPARENT INTENT TO SECURE AND EXPLOIT FISHING RIGHTS IN WEST AFRICA. OWNERSHIP OF THIS CANNES-REGISTERED JOINT COMPANY, FRANSOV, IS APPARENTLY 50/50 WITH CASACRUZ AND FRENCH BANK HOLDING FRENCH SHARE. (CONSULATE NICE MAY BE ABLE TO SUPPLY FURTHER DETAILS.) ONLY FISHING AGREEMENT REACHED SO FAR HAS BEEN THAT WITH SIERRA LEONE (REF. A).

C) GOF CANNOT CONFIRM THAT CASACRUZ HAS SOLD ANY TUNA SEINERS TO SOVIETS OR TO JOINT COMPANY (REFTEL B). CASACRUZ IN FACT OWNS NO FRENCH-REGISTERED BOATS, AND FISHERIES OFFICIALS BELIEVE STORY TO THIS EFFECT TO HAVE BEEN FALSE. GOF HAS INFORMATION THAT SOVIETS HAVE ALREADY CONTRIBUTED SEVEN FISHING VESSELS (TYPE UNSPECIFIED) TO JOINT EFFORT.

2. THE FRENCH CLAIM TO HAVE LITTLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE JOINT VENTURE OR CASACRUZ'S OTHER ACTIVITIES WITH SOVIETS, AND THEY SAY THE COMPANY HAS BEEN ELUSIVE IN RESPONDING TO INQUIRIES. THEY ARE HOWEVER CONCERNED THAT FRANSOV WILL SUCCEED IN OBTAINING FISHING RIGHTS IN WEST AFRICA - PERHAPS AT THE EXPENSE OF FRENCH FLAG FISHERS AND ARE FOLLOWING THE SITUATION WITH INTEREST. THEY ARE UNEASY ABOUT ACTIVE, PROBING ROLE BEING ADOPTED BY CASACRUZ, WHICH HAS ALREADY FLOATED TRIAL BALLOONS CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF REGISTERING THE FRANSOV VESSELS UNDER FRENCH FLAG, AND OBTAINING FISHING RIGHTS IN THE FRENCH KERGULEN ISLANDS (BOTH INITIATIVES, ACCORDING TO OUR CONTACTS, WERE REPULSED).

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